

NOTORIOUS 1950s EC COMICS!

NO. 24
JUNE250
3rd
CANADA

TALES FROM THE CRYPT

FEATURING



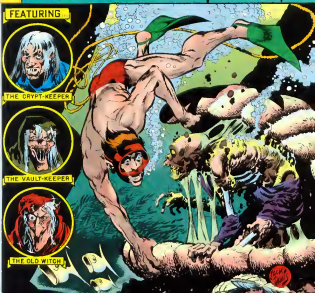
THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE VAULT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH



THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! I SEE YOU'RE *HUNGRY* FOR *HORROR* AGAIN. WELL, REST ASSURED, YOUR *APPETITE* WILL BE *SATISFIED*. IN FACT, WHEN YOU'RE *THROUGH* WITH THIS *PUTRID PERIODICAL*, YOU WILL HAVE *LOST* YOUR *APPETITE* *ENTIRELY*. SO DON'T JUST STAND THERE *DROOLING*. *COME IN!* WELCOME ONCE MORE TO *THE CRYPT OF TERROR*. THIS IS YOUR *HOST* IN *HOWLS*, YOUR *HAUSEATING NARRATOR*, *THE CRYPT-KEEPER*. READY TO *CHILL* YOUR *SPINE* AND *CURL* YOUR *BLOOD* WITH THE *SPINE-TINGLING TALE* OF *TERROR*? I CALL...

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



THE EVENING PERFORMANCE IS OVER AND THE CIRCUS GROUNDS ARE SILENT SAVE FOR THE FLAPPING OF CANNES AND THE OCCASIONAL SCURT OF A CAGED ANIMAL. OVERHEAD, A COLD MOON ILLUMINATES THE MIDNIGHT LANDSCAPE. SUDDENLY, A SHADOWY FIGURE EMERGES FROM ONE OF THE DARKENED TENTS AND SLIDES SILENTLY ACROSS THE MIDWAY, WHISPERING...



THE WOMAN PEERS INTO THE SHADOWS, STRAINING TO SEE, HER HEART RACING. THE MAN STEPS INTO THE DIM COLD LIGHT, HIS ARMS EXTENDED...



OH, ERIC, DARLING...

MY DEAREST...

THEY EMBRACE... WARMLY... PASSIONATELY... HUNGRY LIPS... HOLDING CLOSE...



WHAT ABOUT CARL?

HE IS ASLEEP. HE DREAMS OF PAINS AND THE POWER HE HAS KNOWN...

THE MAN LOOKS INTO THE WOMAN'S EYES, GREY-GREEN IN THE MOONLIGHT

BUT YOU SAID YOU CAN ONLY READ THE THOUGHTS IN HIS MIND. HE WANTS YOU TO READ?

HE TALKS TO ME, ERIC. HE HAS ALWAYS TALKED TO ME WITH THE POWER HE HAS OVER ME!



THE MAN SHAKES HIS HEAD BADLY, STROKING THE WOMAN'S SOFT FLOWING HAIR...



WHY DID YOU EVER MARRY HIM, MARTHA?

IT WAS A MISTAKE, ERIC. I MISFOOT THIS PREAR OF NATURE... THIS ONCE IN A LIFETIME OCCURANCE... THIS ABILITY OF CARL'S TO PROJECT THOUGHTS AND MIND TO READ THEM... FOR LOVE!

WE DISCOVERED THIS ABILITY QUITE BY ACCIDENT MANY YEARS AGO. CARL IMMEDIATELY RECOGNIZED ITS GREAT VALUE. BEFORE I KNEW IT, WE'D TEAMED UP AS A MIND-READING ACT, JOINED THIS TRAVELING CIRQUE, AND WERE MARRIED...

AND YOU'VE BEEN UNHAPPY EVER SINCE...



MISERABLE! I KNOW NOW THAT CARL NEVER LOVED ME. I WAS HIS SUBJECT... HIS THOUGHT-PROJECTION RECEIVER... A PIECE OF APPARATUS... NOTHING MORE. BUT NOW I KNOW WHAT REAL LOVE IS... NOW THAT I'VE MET YOU.



HE WOULD NEVER LET YOU GO. WOULD HE?

NEVER! IF I DO, HIS ACT GOES. HE'S NEVER GIVE ME A DIVORCE. THERE'S NO USE MY ASKING!

THEN WE WILL RUN AWAY... JOIN ANOTHER CIRQUE. I HAVE HAD MANY OFFERS. AN ANIMAL TRAINER IS IN GREAT DEMAND.



THE WIND SIGHS ACROSS THE CIRCUS GROUNDS, WHISPERS AMONG THE TENT ROPES, GASPS AGAINST THE CANVAS... CARRYING THE SIGNS, THE WHISPERS, THE GASPS OF THE LOVERS IN THE SHADOWS... AND IN HIS TENT, CARL STIRS UNEASILY... OPENS HIS EYES...



MARTA, I. I. MARTA? MARTA?

HER BED? IT IS EMPTY! WHERE COULD SHE BE?

CARL SLIPS ON A ROBE AND COMES OUT OF HIS TENT... OUT INTO THE WHISPERING, SIGHING, GASPING WIND.



VOICES? COMING FROM BEYOND THE NEW ANIMAL TRAINER'S TENT...

HIS VOICE... AND MARTA'S!

CARL MOVED THROUGH THE MOON-LIT NIGHT... HIS EYES BURNING LIKE HOT COALS... LISTENING...



...AND AT THE END OF THE NIGHT WHEN I GET MY CHECK, WE WILL LEAVE. FODD AND I TOGETHER...

OH, YES... YES...

...LISTENING TO THE RAGGEDNESS IN HIS WIFE'S VOICE, THE PASSION, THE RUMOR...



...BUT LET'S NOT TALK ANYMORE, ERIC, DARLING. HOLD ME CLOSE...

SWOON MARTA...

...AND THEN, SLOWLY, HE RETURNED TO HIS TENT ONCE MORE. HE HAD HEARD ENOUGH...



SHE... SHE HAD FALLEN IN LOVE WITH HIM! SHE IS LEAVING ME. SHE... I... I MUST STOP HER!

WAS, NOW...

THE MOONLIGHT STREAMS THROUGH THE OPEN TENT-FLAP... FALLING ACROSS THE PRINT, BLACK LETTERS ON GOLD WHITE... THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER...



WHAT'S THIS? "BOOGIES DISMEMBERED AT LOCAL BRAVE YARD... TORN TO PIECES AS IF ATTACKED BY WILD BEAST?"

OF COURSE! "TORN TO PIECES BY WILD BEAST" THAT'S HOW I CAN STOP HER FROM LEAVING. THAT'S IT?



LATER, WHEN MARTA RETURNS FROM HER rendezvous, AND CRAMBLES BACK INTO BED, CARL, PRETEXTING HE IS ASLEEP...



ONLY AFTER MARTA HAS SLIPPED OFF INTO DEEP SLEEPER, DOES CARL STIR...AND RISE...AND SO OUT OF THE TENT...



...AND CROSS DIRECTLY TO THE NEW ANIMAL TRAINER'S TENT WITH GUN IN HAND...



HUH? WHO'S THERE? WHO...

GET UP! AND DON'T MAKE A SOUND!

ERIC STUMBLES TO HIS FEET...

WHAT'S THE MEANING? SO YOU OF THIS, CARL? PUT DOWN THAT GUN... WERE GOING TO RUN OFF WITH MY WIFE, ERIC? WELL, WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT! MORE!



CARL MOTIONS ERIC OUT OF THE TENT AND DOWN THE LONG SILENT MOUNTAIN TOWARD THE BIG TOP...



WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, CARL?

I, ERIC? I'M NOT GOING TO DO ANYTHING! YOUR LION WILL DO THE WORK!

THEY CROSS THE TAMPARK FLOOR OF THE BIG TOP UNTIL THEY COME TO THE LION CAGE. THE TANNY BEAST PAGES BACK AND FORTH HUMBLY...



MY LION??

YES, ERIC. I'M GOING TO PUT YOU IN THE CAGE WITH HIM... WITHOUT YOUR GUN. WITHOUT ANYTHING... JUST YOU AND YOUR LION!

WITHOUT MY GUN?? I'D BE HELPLESS... PARALYZED... UNABLE TO DEFEND MYSELF! FOR GOD'S SAKE, CARL! HAVE PITY!



PITY IS AN EMOTION BELONGING TO THE PITIFUL, ERIC. GET IN...

CARL SWINGS OPEN THE BARRIED DOOR AND PUSHES. ERIC SCREAMS AND GOES SPRAWLING. THE LION SWARLS.



AND THEN, THE CIRCUS SOUNDING ECHO WITH THE BLOOD-CURLING SHRIEKS OF A MAN BEING TORN TO SHREDS BY THE RAZOR SHARP FANGS OF A BLOOD-THIRSTY BEAST.



ERIC'S ANGUISHED SHRIEKS AWAKEN MARTA AND SHE LOOKS AROUND WILDLY...



CARL'S BED IS EMPTY! OUTSIDE THE TENT, FOOTSTEPS POUND UP THE HIGHWAY TOWARD THE BIG-BOY MARTA SLIPS ON A ROBE AND BURSTS FROM THE TENT...



SHE RUNS WITH THE REST OF THEM UNTIL THEY COME TO THE LION TRAINER'S CAGE.



SHE SCREAMS HIS NAME TWICE, AND THEN SHE JUST STANDS THERE, WATCHING THE BEAST LICK AT THE SLASHED AND SHREDDED BODY UNTIL SHE HAS TO TURN AWAY AS THE MALLARD SWEEPS OVER HER...



AND THEN, SICK, SHE RETURNS TO HER TENT AND SITS AND WAITS, CRYING, UNTIL CARL COMES IN WITH THAT EVIL, GRIN ON HIS COLD IMPASSIVE FACE...



BUT THERE IS NO COURT IN MARTA'S MIND AS TO HOW ERIC DIED. CARL'S BED WAS EMPTY WHEN ERIC'S SCREAMS AWAKENED HER. THE SHEETS WERE GONE.

I HAVE YOU!
HAVE YOU!

YOU WILL GET
OVER IT, MARTA!



THE NEXT DAY'S PERFORMANCE IS CANCELLED BECAUSE OF THE TRAGEDY. THE TENTS ARE LOWERED. THE CIRCUS PREPARED TO MOVE ON...

LOOK DUFF CARL!



IT HAPPENS SUDDENLY. WITHOUT WARNING, CARL IS HELPING WITH THE DISMANTLING OF THE SH-TOP WHEN THE MAIN SUPPORT TOPPLES.

GOOD LORD!



THE HEAVY POLE CRASHES DOWNWARD UPON CARL, CRUSHING HIM BENEATH ITS MASSIVE WEIGHT.



AND WHEN THE HUGE SUPPORT IS LIFTED, CARL LIES DEATHLY STILL. HIS GLAZED EYES STARE...

HE... HE'S DEAD?

TWO IN A ROW!
THE CIRCUS IS
JUNKED!

SOMEBODY
GET HIS
WIFE!



MARTA IS SUMMONED. SHE STANDS IMPASSIVELY OVER HER HUSBAND'S BODY, SHEDDING NO TEARS, SHOWING NO SIGN OF EMOTION...

IT... IT WAS AN
ACCIDENT.
MARTA! THE
MAIN SUPPORT...

HE... HE WILL HAVE
TO BE BURIED BEFORE
WE CAN GO ON!



MARTA'S VOICE IS COLD... CALLOUS, AS SHE ASKS

SOMEBODY SEND FOR AN
UNDERTAKER...



MARTA LOOKS DOWN AT THE STILL FORM OF HER HUSBAND LYING ON THE TANGBARK FLOOR. AND EVEN THOUGH SHE READS HIS THOUGHTS, SHE SHOWS NO SIGN OF REGRETION...



MARTA! MARTA, I AM ALIVE! I'M NOT DEAD! MARTA! LISTEN TO ME! PLEASE! TRY TO HEAR WHAT I AM THINKING! I'M PARALYZED, MARTA! I'M NOT DEAD! I'M PARALYZED! I CAN SEE! I CAN HEAR! I CAN'T MOVE!

AS THE UNDERTAKER AND HIS ASSISTANT LIFT POOR CARL INTO THE WICKER, MARTA MOVES FORWARD.



MARTA! PLEASE! SAVE ME! I'M ALIVE! MARTA! I'M ALIVE! PARALYZED! NOT DEAD! PARALYZED! MARTA! PLEASE

WAIT!



OH, MARTA! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

YES, MEXM?

PLEASE DON'T ENBALM HIM. BURY HIM AS HE IS, HE WOULD HAVE WANTED IT THAT WAY!

ANYTHING YOU SAY, MEXM?

MARTA! MARTA, NO!

MARTA LOOKS DOWN INTO PARALYZED EYES THAT CAN STILL SEE... WHISPERS INTO PARALYZED EARS THAT CAN STILL HEAR...

GOOD-BYE, CARL!

MARTA! OH, GOOD! MARTA...

AT THE FUNERAL, MARTA STANDS, HER FACE A GRANITE MASK, BESIDE THE TURNING PIT BELOW CARL'S COFFIN.



YOU CAN STOP THEM, MARTA! THERE'S STILL TIME! I KNOW YOU CAN HEAR ME. I KNOW IT! PLEASE! I BEG IF YOU DON'T LET THEM BURY ME ALIVE!

LOWER THE COFFIN!

AND EVEN THOUGH THE SOIL IS SHOVELED DOWN UPON THE COFFIN, CARL'S FRANTIC THOUGHT WAVED STILL COME THROUGH TO HER. TO HER AND ONLY HER. TO MARTA, WHO TURNS AND WALKS AWAY DOWN THE PATH LEADING OUT OF THE CEMETERY...



MARTA! DON'T DO THIS! PLEASE! SAVE ME! PLEASE! OHLORD MAKE HER SAVE ME!

CEME

THE AFTERNOON WINDS, THE NIGHT BREEZE COMES UP, WHISPERING OVER THE GRAVE MOUNDS. SIX FEET BELOW, IN HIS COFFIN, CARL CONCENTRATES AS THE PRECIOUS OXYGEN SLOWLY DISAPPEARS...

MARTA! COME BACK! COME SAVE ME! I'LL DO ANYTHING! ANYTHING! WHY FIT ON ME! HAVE PITY!



THE STARS COME OUT, WHITE PIN-POINTS IN A VELVET SHroud. A FIGURE MOVES OVER THE GRAVE MOUNDS...

I KNOW YOU ARE RECEIVING MY THOUGHTS, MARTA! I KNOW.



A SHOVEL DIGS INTO THE SOFT EARTH.

MARTA! MARTA, YOU DID COME! YOU DID!



THE DIGGING CONTINUES, THE SHOVEL SCOOPING AWAY THE SOFT EARTH. FINALLY THE LID OF THE COFFIN SWINGS BACK...

MARTA DARLING? I ON, LORD, YOU'RE NOT MARTA!



AND THEN AS CARL LIES HELPLESS, PARALYZED... LIKE A LION-TAMOR WITH-OUT A WHIP... FEELING THE RAZOR SHARP TEETH RIPPING AND TEARING AT HIS FLESH... UNABLE TO SCREAM AT THE EXCRUCIPATING PAIN, HE THINKS OF THE NEWSPAPER LYING IN THE MOONLIGHT. THE NEWSPAPER THAT FIRST GAVE HIM THE IDEA OF HOW TO KILL ERIC...

'BODIES DISINTERRED AT LOCAL GRAVE YARD FOUND TO BE BONES AS IF ATTACKED BY SOME WILD BEAST!' OH, LORD! THEY WERE WRONG! THIS IS NO BEAST! IT'S A GHOUL!



HER, NOW? YEP, KIDDEST? CARL ENDED UP JUST LIKE ERIC... BEING FORN TO BITS AND UNABLE TO DEFEND HIMSELF, AS FOR MARTA... SHE READ CARL'S FINAL THOUGHTS, AND GOT QUITE A MENTAL PICTURE OF WHAT WAS GOING ON! JUST ONE MORE INCIDENT IN THIS WHOLE SUBJECT AS THE BOP

CEMETERY FORE-MAN KEEPS TELLING HIS WORK CREWS, 'DID THAT CRA-AY GRAVE?' WELL, Y.E. WANTS, SO. 'BYE, NOW!



THE VAULT OF HORROR!

REHEART SALUTATIONS, SLIME SAVORERS! NOW IT'S TIME FOR A JAUNT INTO THE VAULT OF HORROR. THIS IS YOUR HOST IN HORROR, THE HAULT-FEEPER, READY TO ENTERTAIN YOU IN C.E.'S MAG WITH A FAVORITE YUCK-YARN FROM MY CREEP-COLLECTION. SO HAVE THE SACRIFICE READY AND I'LL DOPPEL YOUR STOMACH WITH THE TUMMY-TURNER I CALL...

PEARLY TO DEAD

OUR STORY BEGINS DURING WORLD WAR II, WHEN THE UNITED STATES MARINES WERE SLOWLY AND PAINFULLY INCHING ACROSS THE SOUTH PACIFIC AREA, INVASION AND BATTLES FOR EACH BLOODY STOLL, EACH JAPANESE-INFESTED CORAL ROCK. ONE DAY BLACK STARLESS NIGHT, A SMALL BOAT MOVED SILENTLY TOWARD THE CORAL REEF THAT RINGED THE PEACEFUL LAGOON OF ONE OF THESE JAPANESE-HELD ISLANDS. INSIDE TWO MEN CROUCHED QUIETLY STUDYING THE DANCING FIRES ON THE SHORE ACROSS THE PLACID LAGOON.

BETTER DROP THE ANCHOR, PHIL. THIS IS ABOUT AS CLOSE IN AS WE DARE GO WITHOUT BEING SEEN.

RIGHT, LARRY.



THE ANCHOR SLID OVER THE SMALL BOAT'S REE AND DROPPED WITH A MUFFLED SPLASH INTO THE BLACK PACIFIC. THEN, STRANGEST, THE TWO MEN BEGAN TO UNDOSS...

WHILE I'M CLEARING THE BRUAL NETTING, YOU START SETTING THE DEMOLITION CHARGES, PHIL. CHECK?



THEY STOOD ALMOST NAKED IN THE PACIFIC NIGHT, MUSCLES RIPPLING. THEY BENT AND SLID THE WORDLY SHAPED BLACK RUBBER FLIPPERS ONTO THEIR FEET...PULLED THEIR RUBBER MASKS WITH THE ROUND GLASS WINDOWS OVER THEIR FACES...



READY? GOT THE CHARGES...TIMERS...FUSES?

RIGHT? GOT YOUR WIRE CLIPPERS...UNDERWATER LAMP...BACK-SART?

SILENTLY, THE TWO MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY'S UNDERWATER DEMOLITION TEAM...THE FABULOUS FROMER...SLID OVER THE SIDE OF THEIR SMALL BOAT AND INTO THE CHOPPY PACIFIC...



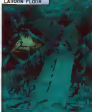
WELL, TAKE IT EASY, PHIL?

SEE YOU IN A WHILE, LARRY!

...AND WENT ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS...THE BUSINESS OF CLEARING THE WAY FOR THE INVASION OF THE FOLLOWING MORNING. THE ONE NAMED LARRY GLIDED DOWNWARD, FLICKING ON HIS LAMP, SEARCHING OUT THE TREASONOUS PROPELLER-SHATTERING STEEL NETTING...



...AS THE OTHER, THE ONE NAMED PHIL, SKIMMED BELOW THE SURFACE TO THE PILING SUNK IN THE LAGOON FLOOR



WITH THE NETTING CLIPPED AND SAVED AND OUT ANY AND FORTHED HARMLESS, LARRY SHOT TOWARDS PHIL TO HELP PLACE THE DEMOLITION CHARGES, HIS LANTERN BEAM RUNNING ACROSS THE SANDY BOTTOM OF THE LAGOON...



AND THEN, SUDDENLY, HE SAW IT...STRETCHING AWAY BELOW HIM IN THE GLOOMY MURKY DARKNESS...THE OYSTER BED...



AS LARRY CIRCLED OVER THE BED, STUDYING THE ABNORMALLY-LARGE SHELLED SEA CREATURES WITH THEIR PRICELESS GLOVED GEMS EMBEDDED IN THEIR GUMMING HEAVY BODIES, PHIL GLIDED TOWARD HIM, STARING WIDE-EYES.



THE TWO MEN SURFACED BEHIND THEIR BOAT, GASPING FOR BREATH...



DID YOU SEE IT, PHIL? THERE, GASP... THERE MUST BE A PORTAGE IN PEARLS IN THAT OYSTER BED! I'M GOING BACK... GASP... DOWN...

DON'T BE A FOOL, LARRY! I'VE SET THE CHARGES. C'MON! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!

MINUTES LATER, THE SMALL BOAT WAS HUMMING SEAWARD. BEHIND, THE DEMOLITION CHARGES EXPLODED IN THE FLACID LAGOON SIGNALING THE MIGHTY BATTLE BARRAGE OFFSHORE TO BEGIN THEIR BARRAGE. LARRY SCROO ABOVE THE OIL...



WE'LL COME BACK, PHIL! AFTER THIS CRAZY MESS IS OVER, WE'LL COME BACK FOR THOSE PEARLS! WE'LL BE BACK!

SURE, LARRY! SURE!

AT DAWN THE NEXT MORNING, THE ASSAULT BOATS STORMED THE QUIET LAGOON, AND PROPELLERS CHURNED BLOOD INTO THE WATERS ABOVE THE OYSTER BED...



THE BEACHHEAD WAS SECURED. THE DEMOLITION TEAM'S WORK WAS DONE. LARRY AND PHIL WERE SHIPPED ELSEWHERE TO OTHER ISLANDS, WITH OTHER LAGOONS...



THEY SAY THIS ATOM BOMB WROTE OUT A WHOLE CITY, PHIL. MAYBE THE JAPS'LL SURRENDER NOW. THEN...

C'MON! STOP DREAMIN' ABOUT THOSE PEARLS! HOW GET JUST?

V-J DAY! PEACE! IT CAME SUDDENLY... AFTER THE SECOND A-BOMB WAS DROPPED, THE JAPANESE ORDERED AN UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER AND THE WAR WAS OVER.



HEY, PHIL! SNIPPING ORDERS? WE'RE GOING HOME! WE'RE GETTING OUT!

LET'S SEE...

SAN FRANCISCO'S GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE CAME UP OUT OF THE MIST ONE MORNING. THE TROOPSHIP SLIPPED BENEATH IT AND MOVED IN TOWARDS A HIER WHERE BARDS PLAYED AND CHILDREN CHEERED AND WOMEN BOOED HAPPILY...



LOOK, PHIL! THERE'S GLADYS!

GLADYS? WHERE?

THEY CAME DOWN THE GANGPLANK TOGETHER, SIDE BY SIDE, LARRY AND PHIL. BUT THE GIRL THAT WAITED WITH TEAR-STAINED CHEEKS HAD EYES FOR ONLY ONE OF THEM.



PHIL, CARLINO...

GLADYS SAYS...

HEY, WHEN DOES AN ALIEN GO TO REGISTER?

LARRY TRIED TO HIDE THE JEALOUS ANGER...THE HURT THAT HE FELT. GLADY'S PREFERENCE HAD COME AS A GREAT SHOCK TO HIM...



I...I WANTED TO TELL YOU, LARRY! BUT... WELL... I...

I UNDERSTAND, GLADYS.

PHIL HAD WON AGAIN. IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THAT EVER SINCE THEIR COLLEGE DAYS. THEY'D BOTH COME OUT FOR THE SWIM TEAM...



THAT'S GOOD TIME WASN'T IT? WHAT DID YOU SAY YOUR NAME WAS?

LARRY? LARRY MILLS!

LARRY'D DONE HIS BEST. BUT PHIL... PHIL HAD DONE JUST A LITTLE BIT BETTER.



CONGRATULATIONS, BOY! THAT BEATS MILES' TIME BY EIGHT TENTHS!

THE NAME'S PHIL CANNON, COACH!

LARRY AND PHIL HAD BECOME FAST FRIENDS IN COLLEGE. BUT THERE WAS ALWAYS THAT RIVALRY BETWEEN THEM...



COME ON, LARRY!

LET'S GO, PHIL!

MILES IS GREAT, AND CANNON IS BETTER. WE'VE GOT SOME SWIM TEAM THIS YEAR.

NOT ONLY IN THE POOL... BUT ALSO ON THE CAMPUS.



HEY, YOU TWO! I WANT YOU TO MEET GLADYS HART! GLADYS, MEET OUR TWO SWIM CHAMPS, LARRY MILLS AND PHIL CANNON.

VERY NICE! ARE YOU SLEEPY TONIGHT, MISS HART?

SORRY, LARRY! MISS HARTY ALREADY HAS A DATE WITH ME!

WHEN GLADYS HAD COME INTO THEIR LIVES, THE RIVALRY BETWEEN THE TWO BOYS HAD INCREASED. THEY BOTH FALLER IN LOVE WITH HER.



GLADYS, YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT YOU! SAY 'YES'... AND I'LL BUY YOU THE BIGGEST ENGAGEMENT RING IN THE STORE.

LARRY? I... I LIKE YOU... BUT... WELL, I JUST CAN'T MAKE UP MY MIND!

THEN, PEARL HARBOR, AND THE U.S. WAS IN A WAR THE NAVY HAD COME TO LARRY AND PHIL... ASKED THEM TO JOIN THE UNDERWATER DEMOLITION TEAM. AND THEY'D ACCEPTED...



SO LONG, LARRY!

WRITES!

I WILL! GOOD-BYE, MOM! TAKE CARE.

AND NOW THEY WERE BACK FROM THE WAR, STANDING ON A JARRED PIER FULL OF RETURNED SAILORS AND SOLDIERS AND HAPPY LOVED ONES, AND PHIL HAD WON A WAR...



WE'RE... WE'RE... FROM PHIL GOING TO BE MARRIED, LARRY! I MEAN... WHAT ABOUT OUR BOSSNESS OUT THERE... IN THE PACIFIC?

IT'LL BE A LOVELY PLACE TO TAKE GLADYS ON OUR HONEYMOON, LARRY.



OH, SURE! SURE! WELL, CONGRATULATIONS, YOU TWO!

DITCHWADGE! CIVILIAN CLOTHING AGAIN! FREEDOM FROM REGIMENTATION! DISCIPLINE! THEY WERE ALL LARRY'S NOW AND A SECRET, TOO! A MILLION DOLLAR SECRET! JUST ONE THING... ONE THING WENT NOT HIS, YET? GLADYS!



I PICKED UP THESE SURPLUS FLIPPERS AND MARKS, PHIL. I THOUGHT WE'D TRY THEM OUT TONIGHT.

LOOK, FELLER! I'M GETTING MARRIED TOMORROW! HAVE A HEART!

LARRY CONVINCED PHIL THAT AFTER HE WAS MARRIED THERE'D BE NO CHANCE TO TRY OUT THEIR EQUIPMENT, AND PHIL RELUCTANTLY AGREED. THEY DROVE OUT TO A LONELY BEACH...



I PICKED THIS SPOT BECAUSE IT'S SO MUCH LIKE THAT LAGUNA, PHIL!

YEAH! IT... IT IS! WELL! LET'S GO!

LARRY HAD PLANNED IT ALL SO CAREFULLY! WITH PHIL DEAD, GLADYS, THE SECRET OF THE FEAR-BED... EVERYTHING... WOULD BE HIS...



LARRY! WHAT THE ?

IT'S GOING TO BE SUCH A PITY, PHIL... A GOOD SWIMMER LIKE YOU IS DROWNING!

THEY STRUGGLED WILDLY, THERE IN THE FOAMING SURF OF THAT LONELY CALIFORNIA BEACH. LARRY HELD PHIL'S THROAT IN A VICE-LIKE GRIP, UNTIL PHIL'S BODY WENT LIMP AND LIFE LEFT IT AND IT SLIPPED FROM LARRY'S GRASP AND SANK BENEATH THE OCEAN WAVES...



AND LARRY CAME OUT OF THE WATER ALONE WITH A GRIM SMILE ON HIS FACE AND THE STORY HE'D TELL GLADYS SO CLEAR IN HIS MIND...



GLADYS LISTENED TO LARRY AS HE BOILED OUT THE STORY OF HOW THEY'D GONE SWIMMING. HE AND PHIL... AND PHIL'D GONE DOWN... AND...

...AND BEFORE I COULD GET TO HIM, HE WENT DOWN FOR GOOD. HE... HE MUST HAVE GOTTEN A CRAMP. I... I TRIED TO DIVE FOR HIM, BUT THE UNDERM...

NO! BOB... NO ON LORD!



IT WOULD TAKE TIME LARRY DECIDED. TIME FOR GLADYS TO FORGET PHIL. IN THE MEANTIME, HE WOULD GO TO THE SOUTH PACIFIC... TO THE TINY ATOLL WITH ITS FABULOUS OYSTER BED... AND MAKE HIS FORTUNE...

I'LL BE BACK IN THREE MONTHS, GLADYS. PERHAPS, BY THEN, YOU WILL HAVE GOTTEN OVER THIS, AND MAYBE I, YOU AND I.

I'LL NEVER STOP LOVING HIM, LARRY! SOM' NEVER



THE TRIP TO THE ATOLL WAS LONG, BUT LARRY DIDN'T MIND IT. ONCE ON BOARD, HE LOST NO TIME IN MAKING FRIENDS...

BABY, YOU'RE THE MOST GORGEOUS GOLL ON THIS SHIP! I... I... BABY!

WELL... SO OK... DON'T JUST LEAVE ME HANGING!



WERE HIS EYES DECEIVING HIM? WAS THE FOAM AND THE SPRAY AND THE CHURRING WATER BESIDE THE SHIP PLAYING TRICKS ON HIM, OR DID HE ACTUALLY SEE THE BLISTERED WHITE BODY?



WHAT IS IT, LARRY?

THERE? IN THE WATER? I... I... NO! IT CAN'T BE! I MUST BE SEEING THINGS!

AND WAS THE FOUL GLOOM OF THE SEA AND DECAY AND ROTTING FLESH THAT BEARED HIS NOSTRILS WHEN HE OPENED HIS CABIN DOOR THAT NIGHT JUST LARRY'S IMAGINATION?



CHUCK

WAS IT A DREAM? OR DID LARRY ACTUALLY SEE THE WHITE PULPY FISH-PITTED FACE IN THE PORTHOLE THAT NIGHT WHEN HE'D BEEN STARTLED OUT OF A SOUND SLEEP...



MUNT WHO...WHO... GOOD LORD!

AND WAS IT THE SEA, OR DID HE ACTUALLY HEAR THAT LAUGHTER... THAT HIPPLING BLOOD-CURDLING LAUGHTER COMING IN FROM THE MURKY FOG BEYOND THE SHIP THE NIGHT HE STROLLED THE DECK ALONE.



WHO...WHO'S OUT THERE?

THE SHIP DOCKED AT TAHITI AND LARRY LOST NO TIME IN HIRING A PLANE TO TAKE HIM SOUTH TO THE ATOLL.



CAN YOU LAND THIS CRATE IN A LAGOON?

I CAN DROP IT ON A CORAL MOUNTAIN!

ON THAT FLAME TRIP SOUTH... SWIMMING LOW OVER THE BLUE PACIFIC... WAS LARRY CRAFTY... OR DID HE SEE IT AGAIN... THERE JUST BELOW HIM... THAT ASHER, PUFFY, BLOATED FORM...



STUPID! MISTER CANNOT AIR DROPT

CHUCK, A LITTLE, I GUESS

THE ATOLL CAME UP... A PEARL AGAINST A BLUE BATH SEASIDE... GUARDING ITS OWN PEARL TREASURE. LARRY CANT HIS FEARS FROM HIS MIND WHEN HE SAW IT...



THERE IT IS! LAND IN THAT LAGOON!

RIGHT?

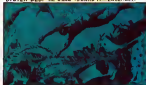
THE TINY SEAPLANE CAME DOWN GENTLY AND BAT BOBBING QUIETLY IN THE BLUE LAGOON AS LARRY UNPACKED HIS GEAR, REMOVED THE FLIPPERS AND THE RUBBER SLASH-WINDOWED MASK, AND BEGAN TO UNDOBBES.



HEFF! WHAT'S GOING ON? YOU GONNA DIVE FOR SOMETHING?

YEP! THERE'S AN OYSTER BED IN THIS LAGOON... WITH PEARLS THE SIZE OF YOUR FIST AND I'M GOING TO GET ME A FEW...

TINY FISH SCATTERED BEFORE HIM AS LARRY SHOT DOWNWARD. HE PASSED THE OLD RUSTED NETTINGS... THE SUNKEN ASSAULT BOATS... THE WATER-LOGGED BLASTED FILINGS... AND THEN HE SAW IT... THE OYSTER BED. HE SWAM TOWARD IT... FASERIK...



LARRY WAS SO BUSY WRENCHING THE LARGEST OYSTER HE COULD FIND FROM THE SANDY BOTTOM THAT HE NEVER NOTICED THE PUTRID, SLIME, WHITE FORM DRIFT TOWARD HIM, AND WHEN ITS BLOATED ARMS CLOSED AROUND HIS NECK, AND THE ROTTED FACE GRINNED AT HIM, IT WAS TOO LATE...



POW... GORE... SLAB...

HEH, HEH! YEP, KIDDER! THAT'S MY YARN. THE **PROT** OF THE SEAPLANE WAITED AROUND FOR LARRY TO COME UP FOR **SEVERAL HOURS**. FINALLY, HE UNBUDED, WENT THROUGH LARRY'S PANTS, EXTRACTED THE MONEY FROM HIS WALLET, TORBESD THE REST OF LARRY'S GEAR INTO THE LAGOON, AND **TOOK OFF** AND YOU'LL TAKE OFF WHEN YOU READ THE **NEXT** **BAULT-KEEPER YARN!** HEH... HEH! NOW I'LL TURN YOU BACK TO **GR!** I'LL SEE YOU **NEXT** IN MY MAG, THE **VAULT OF HORROR!** **WFE!** E.G., THAT IS!



HERE'S A BUBBLY LITTLE TALE OF
TITANIC TERROR! I CALL IT...

PRAIRIE SCHOONER



MILDRED JACKSON FLUNG OPEN THE DOOR OF HER HOUSE AND BOHEALED WITH JOY. HE STOOD ON THE FLINT-STARVED FRONT PORCH, DRESSED RESPLENDENTLY IN HIS CAPTAIN'S UNIFORM, HIS FACE BRONZED FROM FORTY YEARS AT SEA, HIS EYES COLD AND SCOURING, HIS MOUTH GRIN, HIS TWO SUIT CASES BESIDE HIM...

"EERA! EERA! WHY DIDN'T YOU WRITE ME YOU WERE COMING TO VISIT?" OH, EERA... IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

"HELLO, MILLY. GOT A PLACE FOR YER OLD SEA DOG BROTHER TO BUNK DOWN FOR A SPELL?"



MILLY LED EERA INTO THE PARLOR...

"THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM FOR YOU HERE, EERA. YOU KNOW THAT. HOW LONG WILL YOU STAY?"

"JUST A SPELL, MILLY. JUST TILL I DECIDE WHAT I'M GONNA DO NEXT. Y'SEE... THEY TOOK AWAY MY SHIP. THEY RETIRED ME."



"RETIRED... OH, EERA, I'M SO BORING."

"YER, MY DAYLIN' DAYS ARE OVER, MILLY. I'M A LAND-LUBBER, NOW. WELL, WHERE DO I STOW MY BEART?"



THAT WAS HOW EZRA JACKSON CAME TO LIVE WITH HIS SISTER MILLY. AT FIRST, MILLY WAS VERY HAPPY TO HAVE HIM. AFTER ALL, SHE WAS AN OLD MAID... AND EZRA WAS COMPANY. BUT AS TIME WENT ON, EZRA BEGAN TO DO STRANGE THINGS.



EZRA? WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT THROUGH YOUR SPY-GLASS?

HOW?

ONE NIGHT, MILLY WAS ROUSED OUT OF A SOUND SLEEP BY HEAVY PAINS SHAKING HER ROUGHLY...



WHY... WHAT'S WRONG? EZRA? WHAT IS IT?

GET UP, YOU LAZY SWINE. YOU'RE LATE FOR YOUR WATCH, AND IF YOU EVER DO THIS AGAIN, I'LL HAVE YOU THROWN IN THE BAY!

IT WAS OBVIOUS TO POOR MILLY THAT HER OLDER BROTHER WAS ILL... MENTALLY ILL. THE SHOCK OF BEING RETIRED HAD BEEN TOO MUCH FOR HIM. HIS MIND HAD SHATTERED. HE FANDED HIMSELF AT SEA AGAIN... THE HOUSE, HIS SHIP, AND SHE, HIS CARE...



YOU CALL THIS CLEAN? I WANT THIS DECK SCRUBBED TILL I CAN SEE MY REFLECTION! UNDERSTAND?

YES, EZRA!



I SAID WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT WITH YOUR SPY-GLASS?

NOTHING, MILLY! I WAS JUST WATCHING THAT SHIP ON THE HORIZON!



SHIP? BUT EZRA! THIS IS KANSAS! THERE AREN'T ANY SHIPS ON THE HORIZON. THERE ISN'T ANY WATER... FOR HUNDREDS OF MILES!

FROM THAT NIGHT ON, MILLY WAS FORCED TO "STAND WATCH" SHE HAD TO MOVE THROUGH THE HALLS OF THE OLD HOUSE FROM TWO A.M. TO DAWN, CARRYING A LANTERN AND SHOUTING



LOUDER, YOU BLITHERING IDIOT! LOUDER!

EVEN BELLS AND ALL'S BELL!



DON'T "EZRA" ME! IT'S "YES, CAPTAIN JACKSON!" REMEMBER THAT! NOW, GET TO WORK, YOU BLAZE RAT!

Y-YES, CAPTAIN, JACKSON.

MILLY HAD BEEN A SCHOOL TEACHER IN HER YOUNGER YEARS. SHE'D WORKED HARD AND MANAGED TO SAVE A SMALL AMOUNT OF MONEY. SHE'D USED PART OF IT TO BUY THE HOUSE SHE NOW LIVES IN. THE REST, SHE'D INVESTED WISELY, AND SHE'D BEEN ABLE TO LIVE COMFORTABLY. BUT WITH EDNA'S ARRIVAL, HER MEAGER INCOME WAS NOT ENOUGH...



"FRAAAH! YOU CALL THIS FOOD? YOU DARE TO FEED THIS SLOP TO YOUR CAPTAIN? YOU OUGHT TO BE STRUNG UP AND GIVEN TEN LASHES."

"IT'S...IT'S THE BEST WE CAN AFFORD, EDNA! PLEASE TRY TO UNDERSTAND!"



"I UNDERSTAND ONE THING. YOU BELIEVE ME: EITHER THE FOOD IMPROVES, OR IT'S IRONS FOR YOU. AND IT'S 'CAPTAIN JACKSON'! Y'HEART!"

"Y-YES, CAPTAIN JACKSON!"

SO MILLY WAS FORCED TO EARN EXTRA MONEY TO AMMERTY THE SMALL INCOME SHE DERIVED FROM HER INVESTMENTS. SHE HAD TO TAKE IN WASHING...



"WHERE IN BLAZES ARE YOU, YOU SLOPPY SEA COOK?"

"I'M...IN THE GELLAR, CAPTAIN. I'M DOING THE SHIP'S LAUNDRY!"

EDNA CAME DOWN THE CELLAR STAIRS, SCREAMING...



"YOU'RE 'BELOW'! YOU DUMB LANDLUBBER, NOT 'IN THE GELLAR' 'BELOW'!"

"Y-YES, CAPTAIN! I'M...BELOW!"

EDNA STOOD IN THE CENTER OF THE GELLAR FLOOR, STARING ABOUT HIM WITH WIDE BLEAMING EYES...



"PERFECT! PERFECT! JUST THE PLACE FOR MY QUARTERS. HERE YOU SEND FOR THE SHIP'S CARPENTERS...THE SHIP FITTERS..."

"Y-YES, CAPTAIN!"

MILLY WAS HELPLESS. SHE HAD NO OTHER CHOICE... EXCEPT, PERHAPS, TO HAVE EDNA PUT AWAY. SO SHE CALLED IN A CARPENTER...A PLUMBER...



"AWAY, UP THERE! PLEASE GENTLEMEN, REMEMBER, HONOR HIM! HE'S...QUITE HARMLESS..."

"OH, COURAGE! WE MISS JACKSON! STAND, MISS JACKSON!"

EIRA STORMED ABOUT IN THE CELLAR, SHOUTING OUT HIS ORDERS...

RIP OUT THOSE WINDOWS, CLOSE 'EM UP, PUT UP FALSE WALLS. MANDARIN PANELED WALLS, NOT IN PORT HOLES. REAL PORT HOLES—THAT OPEN!

YES, MR. JACKSON

CAPTAIN JACKSON? PUT OCEAN SCENES BEHIND THE PORT HOLES. HANG SHIP'S LANTERNS AROUND. PUT IN A BUMP A GALLEY AHEAD MAKE EVERYTHING AUTHENTIC. THIS IS MY SHIP!

YES, CAPTAIN!



AND POOR MILLY WITHDREW HER LIFE'S SAVINGS FROM HER INVESTMENTS TO PAY FOR THE NONSENSE.

4,500... 3,000 DOLLARS. HERE YOU ARE, MR. SUMNER?

THANK YOU, MA'AM. I HOPE YOUR BROTHER IS HAPPY WITH THE JOB WE DID!



"BELOW" IN HIS SHIP'S QUARTERS, CAPTAIN JACKSON BELLOWED...

STAND BY TO CAST OFF, ENGINE ROOM, FULL SPEED AFTERN, ALL HANDS, MAY YOUR STATIONS... ON THE DOUBLE...



MILLY CAME "BELOW" CARRYING HER LAUNDRY BASKET FILLED WITH THE WASH SHE'D BEEN TAKING IN...

WHAT IN BLAZES ARE YOU COMING DOWN HERE WITH THAT?

I'VE GOT TO DO THE SHIP'S LAUNDRY, CAPTAIN. I'VE...



EIRA STRUCK OUT SAVAGELY...

YOU'LL DO THE LAUNDRY ON DECK, YOU SCALLION BEGGAR. GET OUT OF MY QUARTERS...

OWWWW!



WITH HER INVESTMENTS WIPED-OUT AND THE INCOME FROM THEM GONE, MILLY HAD TO TAKE IN MORE WASH THAN SHE COULD HANDLE IN ORDER TO MEET EXPENSES. AND EZRA'S ABUSE BECAME WORSE AND WORSE...

"SCURVE OUT THAT HEAD YOU FO'G SLE DRUDGE!"

"Y-YES, CAPTAIN!"

POOR MILLY WOULD ESCAPE, EVERY CHANCE SHE COULD GET, AND LOCK HERSELF IN THE UPSTAIRS BATHROOM IN ORDER TO DO THE WASH IN THE TUB... AND AS SHE SCRUBBED, SHE WOULD LISTEN TO EZRA'S BRAYING AND RAVING...

"EASE THE HELM! GIVE 'ER MORE RUDDER! STEADY AS YOU GO! HARD APOFT! STEADY! STEADY GO!"

"SOO... JOO..."



ONE HOT SUMMER'S DAY, EZRA STOOD AT THE OPEN PORT HOLE, SHOUTING OUT AT THE SEA-SCAPE SCENE BEYOND...



"ANDY? ANDY THERE? SHIP ANDY? HOLD FAST... STAND BY!"

WHILE UPSTAIRS, DIRECTLY OVER-HEAD IN THE BATHROOM, MILLY PANTED OVER A LOAD OF WASH...



THE HOT WATER, RUNNING INTO THE TUB OVER THE SOAKING CLOTHES, SENT UP CLOUDS OF STEAM WHICH FILLED THE LOCKED BATHROOM.



SUDDENLY MILLY CLUTCHED AT THE EXCRUCIATING PAIN IN HER CHEST, TOPPLING OVER...



AND AS HER HEART FAILED AND HER LIFE FADED WITH IT, THE BOILING WATER OVERFLOWED THE TUB, POOLING ABOUT HER PROSTRATE BODY, SINKING THROUGH THE BATHROOM FLOOR...



IN HIS CELLAR SHIP'S QUARTERS, CAPTAIN JACKSON LISTEN AS THE WATER, LEAKING DOWN FROM THE OVERFLOWING BATHING ABOVE, FILLED THE SPACE BETWEEN THE FALSE MAHOGANY PANELED WALLS AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE HOUSE.



THE CELLAR FILLED WITH STEAM. CAPTAIN JACKSON STAGGERED TO THE PORT HOLES, BLANNNED THEM SHUT. THE PRESSURE OF THE WATER CRUMBBLED THE PANELED WALLS...



...UNTIL THE BURNING HOT WATER REACHED HIS CHIN...HIS NECK...POURED INTO HIS MOUTH AND STEWED HIS TONGUE...HIS THROAT...HIS LUNGS...



SUDDENLY, THE WATER BEGAN TO POUR THROUGH THE OPEN PORT HOLES...



SLOWLY THE WATER ROSE IN THE CELLAR, BOILING, SCALDING, BLISTERING EZZA'S ASED BODY, BUT HE STUBBORNLY STOOD FAST...



HEE, HEE! YEP, KIDDIES. THAT'S MY MORRID MARINE OFFERING. EZZA FINALLY ENDED UP... IN HOT WATER! THIS IS THE FIRST CASE ON RECORD, BY THE WAY, OF A CAPTAIN GOING DOWN WITH HIS SHIP IN THE MIDDLE OF A KANSAS PRAIRIE... IN A CELLAR. AND NOW, I'LL TURN YOU OVER TO THE OLD WITCH, WHO IS WAITING TO WIND UP MY PEER. KAS! REMEMBER! IF YOU'RE A FAN... AND AN ADDICT... YOU'RE AN... E.E. FAN-ADDICT! WHEN 'TYS, NOW!



THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEH! AND NOW, IT'S MORBID-MEAL-TIME. WELCOME TO THE HAUNT OF FEAR, CREEPS. THIS IS YOUR REVOLTING RESTAURATEUR, THE OLD WITCH, READY TO SLING SLIME...AND WIND UP C.U.'S MUCK-MAW FOR THIS SQUIDID ISSUE. CARE FOR SOME SEA FOOD? WELL, HERE'S A TASTY TERROR TID-BIT TO TURN YOUR STOMACH. I CALL THIS SLOP-SERVING...

HALF-BAKED!

CAULIN DUGAN STOOD IN THE SPOTLESS KITCHEN OF 'THE SEA SHELL RESTAURANT' STARRING IN MORBID FASCINATION AT THE SCURMING, SLUG-GREEN, SPINER-LEGGED CLAWED CREATURE THAT SCRATCHED GRITLY AROUND AT THE BOTTOM OF THE BUTTER TUB. CAUTIOUSLY, HE REACHED IN AND PULLED ONE OF THEM FROM THE TUB, HOLDING IT UP. HE LAUGHED BRUTALLY.

"YOU'RE HEH? YOU DISGUSTING THING. NOW, NOW! DON'T STRUGGLE! IT'S NO USE! HEH, HEH!"



CAULIN REACHED FOR A KNIFE. HE PLACED THE STRUGGLING LOBSTER, BELLY UP ON THE HUGE WOODEN KITCHEN TABLE AND GRINNED DOWN AT IT.

"FIRST, WE SPLIT YOU OPEN... FROM HEAD TO TAIL... LIKE SO..."



THE LOBSTER SQUIRMED. CALVIN FORCED THE KNIFE BLADE AGAINST ITS SOFT-SHELLED UNDERSIDE AND, WITH A SLIGHT SAWING MOTION, CRUNCHED IT THROUGH THE LOBSTER, NOW PRACTICALLY SEVERED IN HALF. STILL WRIGGLING ITS SPINY LEGS AND WAVED ITS HUGE CLAWS AWKWARDLY.



HEH, HEH. NOW I WISH THAT I HAD SOME SENSITIVE INSTRUMENT SO THAT I COULD HEAR YOUR BLOOD-SOURLINE SARIERS, LITTLE UGLY MONSTER

CALVIN MOVED THE THRASHING SPLIT LOBSTER ONTO A PLATE AND SLID IT INTO THE STOVE, BELOW THE LICKING BLUE FLAMES OF THE BROILER.



AND NOW WE BROLL FOR ALIVE WE LISTEN TO YOU HISS AND POP UNTIL YOU TURN ORANGE-RED AND YOU STOP YOUR SQUAWKING

CALVIN STARED INTO THE STOVE AT THE BROILING LOBSTER. HIS EYES GLINTED ALMOST MANIACALLY AS HE WATCHED ITS STRUGGLING ABAFE



DEAD, ALREADY, BLAST IT!

CALVIN GRINNED... I MUST LOWER THE FLAME SO THAT THE HEAT ONE WILL DIE SLOWER!



BEHIND CALVIN, THE SEA SHELL RESTAURANT'S CHIEF SHOOK HIS HEAD AS HE WATCHED HIS EMPLOYEE



WHY DO YOU TAKE SUCH SADISTIC DELIGHT IN KILLING THOSE POOR LOBSTERS, MR. DUGANT?

I HATE THEM, JOHN!

CALVIN'S FACE GROW GRIM AS HE TURNED TO HIS CHIEF...



I HATE UGLY AND HORRIBLE CREATURES! HORRIBLE CREATURES SHOULD DIE HORRIBLY!

A LOBSTER IS A LIVING THING, MR. DUGANT. NO LIVING THING SHOULD BE MADE TO SUFFER

A LOBSTER IS HIDEOUS... UNLIT IT DESERVES TO SUFFER, JOHN. ITS OWN HIDEOUS MERITS IN UGLY DEATH...



PERHAPS... TO A LOBSTER... IT IS YOU WHO ARE UGLY, MR. DUGANT!

MEANWHILE, AT THAT VERY MOMENT, A FEW MILES UP THE SEACOAST FROM THE SEA SHELL RESTAURANT, A FISHERMAN GUIDES HIS INBOARD OVER THE TROUBLED OCEAN SWEDS TO A CORK FLOAT FROM WHICH FLEW A TATTERED FLAG.



THE FISHERMAN PULLED UP BESIDE THE BOBBING MARKER AND PULLED IT INTO HIS SEA SKIFF, SLOWLY, TEDIIOUSLY, HE HAULED IN THE DRIPPING LINE, THAT WAS FASTENED TO THE CORK FLOAT...



FINALLY, THE LOBSTER TRAP SURFACED, AND THE FOUL SCENT OF THE FISH HEAD, PLACED WITHIN IT AS BAIT, REARED THE FISHERMAN'S NOSETHILLS...



SADLY, THE FISHERMAN GUIDED HIS INBOARD BACK TO THE BEACH WHERE A WOMAN AND CHILD STOOD IN THE DOORWAY OF A WIND-SCARRED SHACK, WAITING.



THE FISHERMAN ENTERED HIS DINKY SHACK AND SAT DOWN WEARILY...

THE CHILD BEGAN TO CRY.



THE SEA SNAIL RESTAURANT WAS NOTED FOR ITS BROILED LOBSTER. PEOPLE CAME FROM MILES AROUND TO FEAST ON THE SACCULANT WHITE MEAT DIPPED IN BUTTER SAUCE. CALVIN DUGAN DID A THRIVING BUSINESS.

THE LOBSTER WAS ESPECIALLY FASTY TODAY, MR. DUGAN.

THANK YOU, MR. HINES. GOOD EVENING, COME AGAIN.



AFTER CLOSING TIME THAT NIGHT, JOHN, THE CHEF, REMINDED CALVIN...

WE'RE GETTING LOW ON LOBSTERS, MR. DUGAN. IF WE HAVE A GOOD CROWD TOMORROW, WE'LL RUN OUT!

I'LL PICK SOME UP IN THE MORNING ON THE WAY IN! GOOD-NIGHT, JOHN.



JOHN HODES AND LEFT. CALVIN LISTENED AS THE CAR MOTOR ECHOED AWAY INTO THE NIGHT, THEN TURNED TO THE ALMOST EMPTY TUB...

AFTER A WHILE, CALVIN LEFT THE RESTAURANT. HE LOOKED UP CAREFULLY, BUT HE DID NOT GET INTO HIS CAR. INSTEAD, HE WALKED DOWN TO THE BEACH...

HE MOVED DOWN THE BEACH TO WHERE A SEA SKIFF WAS MOORED. UNTYING IT, CALVIN PUSHED THE CRAFT INTO THE ONCOMING BREAKERS.



HODES, DISGUSTING CREATURES!



BLAST IT! THERE'S A MOON OUT TONIGHT WELL, I'LL HAVE TO CHANGE IT.



THE INBOARD MOTOR COUGHED AND SPUTTERED, THEN BEGAN TO HUM EVENLY. CALVIN GUIDED THE SKIFF OUT INTO THE OPEN SEA...

A FEW MILES OUT HE PULLED UP BESIDE A ROBBING MARKER FROM WHICH A TATTERED FLAG FLAPPED.



AMBROSE, THE LOBSTER FISHERMAN, FACED THE FLOOR OF HIS DINNY SHACK. LUCK, HIS WIFE, WATCHED HIM WITH SAD EYES.



COME TO BED, AMBROSE. YOU MUST GET UP EARLY.

I AM NOT SLEEPING. I AM THINKING ABOUT MY LOBSTER POTS.

AMBROSE STOPPED PACING. HE LISTENED. FAR AWAY, OVER THE ROAR OF THE SURF POUNDING THE NEARBY BEACH, AMBROSE HEARD A SOUND... A DULL HAMMING SOUND.



A SEA SKIFF. OUT THERE IN THE MOONLIGHT. IS THAT'S IT?

WHAT IS IT, AMBROSE?

AMBROSE POINTED OUT TO SEA. OUT TO THE DISTANT TOSSED SWELLS.



SOMEONE'S OUT THERE. THAT'S WHY MY LOBSTER POTS ARE ALWAYS EMPTY. SOMEONE IS STEALING MY LOBSTERS.

AMBROSE WAIT!

AMBROSE WAS OUT OF THE DOOR OF HIS WEATHER BEATEN SHACK IN A FLASH.



AMBROSE! COME BACK!

I'LL GET HIM, LUCK! I'LL GET HIM!

FAR OUT ON THE MOONLIT WAVES, CALVIN OUGAN LIFTED A LOBSTER POT INTO HIS SEA SKIFF.



TWO BEAUTIES! THAT'S SEVENTEEN ALREADY AND I'VE ONLY RAISED HALF OF HIS TRAP.

SUDDENLY CALVIN LOOKED UP. SCARCELY ONE HUNDRED YARDS AWAY, ANOTHER SEA SKIFF GLIDED TOWARD HIM SILENTLY.



IT'S THE LOBSTER FISHERMAN. HE MUST HAVE MOVED OUT. THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T HEAR HIM! I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!

CALVIN STRUGGLED WITH HIS HUSBAND, TRYING TO START IT. THE OTHER SEA SKIFF PULLED ALONGSIDE, THE FISHERMAN IN IT LANDED AT HIM WITH BURNING EYES.



SO? NO WONDER MR. OUGAN HADN'T BOTHERED TO STOP BY LATELY TO SEE IF I HAVE ANY LOBSTERS TO SELL. HE KNEW!

KEEP AWAY! AMBROSE! KEEP AWAY! I HATE YOU!

AMERBROE SMARLED...



YOU BELY THIEF!
YOU MISERABLE MONSTER!
MY CHILD HAS GONE
WITHOUT MYLH AND
MEAT AND CLOTHES
BECAUSE OF YOU!

I'LL PAY
YOU,
AMERBROE!
I'LL PAY

AMERBROE SCREAMED...



PAY ME!! NEVER!
I'M GOING TO **REPORT**
YOU TO THE **POLICE.**
THEY'LL THROW
YOU IN **JAIL,** WHERE
YOU **BELONG!**

DON'T BE
A FOOL,
AMERBROE!
I'LL PAY
YOU **WELL**
TO **FORGET**
THIS!

NO! I WON'T TAKE
YOUR MONEY! IT'S
JAIL FOR YOU...
JAIL...

YOU
FORCE
ME TO DO
THIS,
AMERBROE!



THE KNIFE BLADE IN CALVIN OUSEN'S HAND
GLINTED IN THE MOONLIGHT...



NOW, I'LL HAVE TO KILL YOU,
AMERBROE... TO KEEP YOU
FROM **TALKING...**

AMERBROE'S SHIRTS EDGED ACROSS THE HEAVING WATER
AS CALVIN PLUNGED THE KNIFE INTO HIS WHITING BODY
AGAIN AND AGAIN...



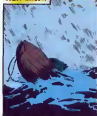
THEN, CALVIN LASHED AMERBROE INTO HIS SEA SKIFF...



...AND CHOPPED A HOLE IN THE FLOORBOARDS, LETTING
THE SEA WATER IN.



SLOWLY, THE BOAT, WITH ANDROS'S BODY, SANK BOLDLY THE TOSSEING OCEAN WAVES...



CALVIN STARTED HIS ENVOY AND GUIDED HIS SEA SKIFF BACK TO THE BEACH...



...AND LOADED THE BUTTERTUB WITH THE STOLEN LOBSTERS INTO HIS CAR TRUNK...



HE'D STARTED HOME...ROARING DOWN THE COAST ROAD AT BREAKNECK SPEED...WHEN THE BLOW-OUT OCCURRED.



AS CALVIN'S LURCHING CAR SPUN OVER, THE STEERING WHEEL SHATTERED, RIPPING INTO HIS BODY...TEARING SLASHING...



HE LAY THERE, PINNED, SCOURGING, HIS BODY ALMOST SPLIT IN TWO, AS THE OVERTURNED CAR CAUGHT FIRE AND THE FLAMES LICKED AT HIM AND HE SCREAMED AND BURNED AND WAS BURNED ALIVE...



HIE, HIE! THAT'S MY STORY, KIDDER! CALVIN ENDED UP LIKE THE LOBSTERS HE'S BEEN STEALING. WHEN I CAME UPON HIS BURNING CAR, HE WAS JUST ABOUT DONE. I WAS SO MAD THERE WASN'T A DROP OF BUTTER SAUCE AROUND! AND TALKING ABOUT SAUCE, YOU'D BETTER HURRY UP AND JOIN US E.G. FAN-ADDICTS! BUT REMEMBER, MEMBERSHIP IS LIMITED TO 150,000,000 PEOPLE. SO DON'T LOSE OUT! GET BACK ISSUES OF OUR PERVERTED PERIODICALS



AND WRITE TO THE CREEP-KEEPER AND LET HIM KNOW WHAT YOU THINK OF OUR BOOK. FOR DETAILS, READ C.K.'S COLUMN!



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